1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES	
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3	MANUEL JOSE LOZANO, :	
4	Petitioner : No. 12-820	
5	v. :	
6	DIANA LUCIA MONTOYA ALVAREZ :	
7	x	
8	Washington, D.C.	
9	Wednesday, December 11, 2013	
10		
11	The above-entitled matter came on for ora	аl
12	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States	
13	at 10:06 a.m.	
14	APPEARANCES:	
15	SHAWN P. REGAN, ESQ., New York, New York; on behalf of	
16	Petitioner.	
17	LAUREN A. MOSKOWITZ, ESQ., New York, New York; on behal	lf
18	of Respondent.	
19	ANN O'CONNELL, ESQ., Assistant to the Solicitor	
20	General, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; fo	or
21	United States, as amicus curiae, supporting	
22	Respondent.	
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1	PROCEEDINGS	
2	(10:06 a.m.)	
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument	
4	first this morning in Case 12-820, Lozano v. Alvarez.	
5	Mr. Regan.	
6	ORAL ARGUMENT OF SHAWN P. REGAN	
7	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER	
8	MR. REGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice,	
9	and may it please the Court:	
10	I represent Manuel Jose Lozano, a father who	
11	loves his daughter. Respondent kidnapped that daughter	
12	and concealed her from Mr. Lozano, first in the United	
13	Kingdom for nearly eight months; then in France, then in	
14	the United States. In Abbott, this Court recognized	
15	child abduction to be one of the worst forms of child	
16	abuse, and that the Convention therefore aims to deter	
17	and prevent child abduction from occurring in the first	
18	instance. Equitable tolling furthers that aim. By	
19	contrast the rule adopted by the Second Circuit provides	
20	a playbook for thwarting the Convention.	
21	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr Mr. Regan, you	
22	you want us to apply equitable tolling in a field,	
23	family law, where the interest of the child is always of	
24	paramount importance and running all through family law	
25	is is that concern. And changed circumstances figure	

- 1 very large. So decrees that might be final in another
- 2 area of law are not, because if circumstances change,
- 3 then the child custody may change. So it seems to me
- 4 that this area is hugely unfit for equitable tolling
- 5 that would leave out consideration of the child's best
- 6 interests.
- 7 MR. REGAN: Justice Ginsburg, we believe
- 8 that equitable tolling does provide, within the context
- 9 of the Convention, consideration -- the opportunity for
- 10 courts to consider the interests of the child. And
- that's most poignantly illustrated by some of the cases
- in which it has been applied.
- 13 If I may provide an example. An example in
- 14 Respondent's brief, Mendez Lynch v. Mendez Lynch on page
- 15 31 of their brief. It's a case in which the Court found
- 16 equitable tolling is available, and it found equitable
- tolling applied factually. The Court, however,
- 18 considered the facts and circumstances of the child's
- 19 life, including those facts and circumstances that
- 20 relate to the extent to which the child is settled; but
- 21 it considered those facts and circumstances within the
- 22 rubric of the Article 13 analysis, and that is
- 23 consistent with what other courts have done in what I
- 24 would -- what I would term more natural Article 12 --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Is that equitable

- discretion or is that still equitable tolling? Because
- 2 as I understand equitable tolling, if it applies, and
- 3 say, there's a 6-month suspension, the child must go
- 4 back so that there's -- so that the -- that the weighing
- 5 that you're talking about just doesn't -- doesn't come
- 6 into play.
- 7 MR. REGAN: Thank you, Justice Kennedy. And
- 8 I think this is important because I think this -- this
- 9 illustrates how foreign courts have miscomprehended
- 10 equitable tolling, how it would operate, how it operates
- 11 within the context of the convention. Equitable tolling
- would prevent the abducting parent from taking advantage
- of the Article 12-2 exception, that -- that the child
- 14 should not be returned because the child is now --
- because the parent has met that minimal routine showing
- of the child is now settled. He's going to school, he
- or she is -- has some friends, so on and so forth, that
- they are living a normal life here.
- What it does not prevent, and Mendez
- 20 illustrates this, as do other cases, it does not prevent
- 21 the court from looking at the Article 13 considerations.
- 22 So for example, as in Mendez and other cases, the court
- 23 will still consider if the child -- if the child is of
- sufficient age and maturity to testify such that this
- 25 court should take into account his or her views or

- 1 objections to return, the court can do so.
- 2 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Where is Article 13 so we
- 3 can look at it?
- 4 MR. REGAN: I'm sorry, Justice Ginsburg?
- 5 JUSTICE SCALIA: Where is it in the
- 6 materials?
- 7 MR. REGAN: Mendez v. Lynch.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Article 13, which you're
- 9 referring to.
- MR. REGAN: Oh, Article 13.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I'd like to read it.
- 12 MR. REGAN: I'm sorry. Article 13 is -- it
- is at -- I'm sorry. It's at 135a of the Petition
- 14 Appendix. Excuse me. Article 13 is at 136a. Excuse
- 15 me. 135a is --
- 16 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And -- and it does
- 17 provide -- just while people are looking at it, it does
- 18 provide that, even though there's in your view equitable
- 19 tolling, there are still circumstances in which the
- 20 child would not go back if there's a grave -- grave
- 21 risk?
- MR. REGAN: Grave risk of harm.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Grave risk of harm to the
- 24 child.
- 25 MR. REGAN: -- or if the court finds that it

- 1 would be an intolerable situation.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: But, again, as Justice
- 3 Ginsburg questions, it seems to me indicates, there are
- 4 two different axes here. One is the best interest of
- 5 the child and the other is an adequate deterrent so that
- 6 parents don't abduct. But those axes don't cross very
- ⁷ often, if at all.
- 8 MR. REGAN: I respect, Justice Kennedy, it's
- 9 difficult to balance them. They're somewhat
- 10 incommensurate or, you know, competing considerations
- or -- but both very important. We think that equitable
- tolling properly balances them within the structure of
- the Convention because equitable tolling, again, it --
- 14 it prevents this Article 12-2 exception, but it doesn't
- prevent the Article 13 exception.
- In fact, in many ways what we're talking
- about is not inconsistent with what the English court
- does or did in Cannon. In Cannon, the court said if --
- where there is concealment and subterfuge, there will be
- a heightened burden for establishing settlement.
- Now, in this --
- 22 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But that still -- but
- 23 Article 13 still is different from what's in the best
- interest of the child.
- MR. REGAN: I think --

- 1 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Now, it's true that all
- 2 we're talking about is for the -- during the time in
- which the hearing takes place, but these hearings take
- 4 years and expert witnesses are not available or readily
- 5 available.
- 6 MR. REGAN: Well, Justice Kennedy, to your
- 7 point about timing and essentially provisional return, I
- 8 do think, you know, courts, district courts have shown
- 9 great adeptness at dealing with those issues. They've
- 10 entered conditional orders that require the child be
- 11 returned at a time when the proceeding -- when the
- 12 testimony is necessary.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Excuse me. Let me give you
- 14 this example. Suppose a child is abducted at -- at age
- one and is concealed for 10 years and then the location
- of the child is discovered. The other parent files a
- petition. So that if there's equitable tolling, the
- 18 petition was filed within one year. But during those 10
- 19 years, the child has become very well settled in the new
- 20 country, has learned the language of that country, the
- 21 customs developed, gone to school, developed
- 22 relationships, and so forth.
- Under -- if there is no equitable tolling
- but the abduction can be taken into account under the
- 25 doctrine of equitable discretion, that's -- that's one

- 1 thing. But the way you read this, the way you read the
- 2 Convention, the equitable tolling would mean that the
- 3 petition was filed within a year, and unless one of the
- 4 conditions in Article 13 was met, for example a grave
- 5 risk that the child's return would expose the child to
- 6 physical or psychological harm or otherwise place the
- 7 child in an intolerable situation, then there would
- 8 be -- then the child would have to be removed.
- 9 So there is that major difference, isn't
- there, between those two positions?
- 11 MR. REGAN: There is a significant
- 12 difference. And we think that that significant
- difference is warranted and necessary in order to
- 14 achieve the effect of deterrence, because the Second
- 15 Circuit's rule essentially says to abducting parents:
- 16 If you abduct your child and you conceal your child for
- 17 12 months, you will be rewarded.
- 18 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, that's true. The
- 19 position of the Respondent and the government would give
- a great incentive for parents to abduct children and
- 21 hide them for a period of time. But on the other side,
- 22 as my example I think illustrates, your rule would mean
- that a child who is very well settled in a particular
- location would have to be returned to the other country
- 25 for purposes of the custody determination.

- 1 So why do you think the Convention should be
- 2 read one way rather than the other?
- MR. REGAN: Justice Alito, I hope to make
- 4 abundantly clear that our position, equitable tolling,
- 5 would not mandate that that child be returned. All it
- 6 does -- but it's significant --
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, how would it not?
- 8 MR. REGAN: It -- it changes the question
- 9 that the court asks. Absent equitable tolling, the
- 10 courts -- the question on which -- the question before
- 11 the court is: Is this child settled? And the factors
- 12 the court's looked at, the courts have looked at it, and
- it really -- they're -- you know, "settlement" is not
- defined in the Convention and Congress has left it to
- 15 courts to decide. And courts look at --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, which of the
- 17 articles -- which of the provisions in Article 13
- 18 would -- would prevent the return in the hypothetical
- 19 that Justice Alito just gave you?
- 20 MR. REGAN: Courts have looked at -- and
- 21 I'll say it -- in the decades --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I mean, what -- what does
- 23 Article 13 allow the court to consider? It says: "It's
- not bound to order the return if the person,
- institution, or other body having care of the person of

- 1 the child was not actually exercising the custody rights
- 2 at the time of removal or retention." Well, you know --
- MR. REGAN: That's known as acquiescence.
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: That wouldn't have -- or
- 5 had consent to or -- that wouldn't apply in his
- 6 hypothetical or in this case.
- 7 MR. REGAN: It's really B.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: B: "There is grave risk
- 9 that his or her return would expose the child to
- 10 physical or psychological harm." I mean, we have no
- 11 reason to believe that -- that your client would --
- 12 would harm the child or -- or that the parent in Justice
- 13 Alito's hypothetical would harm the child. "Or
- otherwise place the child in an intolerable situation."
- 15 I don't see how any of those things would -- would come
- 16 to the assistance of the child in -- in Justice Alito's
- 17 hypothetical.
- 18 MR. REGAN: If I may explain by way of
- 19 illustration in some of the cases what courts have
- looked at. And let me give -- Blondin is another
- 21 example cited in our brief, cited by the Solicitor
- 22 General, a Second Circuit, the well-known Second Circuit
- 23 case. That's a natural Article 12-1 case. Petition is
- filed before the period of one year expires.
- The Second Circuit looked at -- or Judge

- 1 Chin, then-Judge Chin in the district court, looked at
- 2 the child's facts and circumstances related to
- 3 settlement as part of that grave risk analysis. There
- 4 was expert testimony, as there often is in these cases,
- 5 that the child was suffering from potential -- from
- 6 post-traumatic stress disorder. Experts testified that
- 7 return of the child -- the child should not be returned
- 8 because it presented a grave risk of harm to the child.
- 9 JUSTICE SCALIA: Physical or psychological
- 10 harm.
- MR. REGAN: That's correct. And there are
- 12 cases, Mendez v. Lynch and others.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: It might be now and then,
- 14 but in the routine case that Justice Alito just gave you
- 15 I don't see how there's any -- any reason at all not to
- 16 get the child back from wherever he's been for 10 years.
- MR. REGAN: If I may answer in two ways in
- 18 the example Justice Alito gave. With a 10-year-old
- child, it's -- it's very likely that the court would
- 20 hear from that child. I think the more difficult
- 21 example is let's make that child 7 or 8. But -- and --
- and there's no evidence these cases have occurred.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Which court? Which court?
- 24 To use the --
- MR. REGAN: United States court.

- 1 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yeah, but Article 13 does
- 2 not say the child -- the child can state -- well, let's
- 3 see. "The child objects to being returned." I guess
- 4 you could limit to that. "May also refuse to order the
- 5 return of the child if it finds that the child objects
- 6 to being returned."
- 7 MR. REGAN: That's been universally adopted
- 8 by the courts hearing testimony.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: So that's the one
- 10 exception, yes.
- MR. REGAN: But -- but the grave risk
- exception, and courts have applied this, it really -- it
- 13 really just -- it -- it changes the question, like in
- 14 Cannon.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: But in a sense what you're
- 16 saying is that it's not an automatic -- it's not an
- 17 automatic rule. The more you argue that Section 13 is
- 18 applicable, the more you're watering down the very rigid
- 19 rule that you want in order to say that there has to be
- deterrence.
- MR. REGAN: I understand that point.
- However, there is a difference. And so what we're
- trying to balance here, and I think -- it's not we.
- What the Convention balances, what courts applying the
- 25 Convention have found is the proper balance, is not for

- 1 courts to say, well, let's try and figure out what the
- 2 best interests are. In fact, the Convention couldn't be
- 3 clearer and Congress couldn't have been clearer that
- 4 that is not where it -- that's where it least wanted
- 5 courts wading into those waters.
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: The Convention says in the
- 7 preamble that the parties -- that's countries -- are
- 8 firmly convinced that the interests of the children are
- 9 of paramount importance in matters relating to their
- 10 custody. Okay? Paramount importance. So the provision
- 11 you're talking about, Article 13, says, well, would
- 12 returning the child lead to physical harm, psychological
- harm, or otherwise put the child in an intolerable
- 14 position. So they mean intolerable.
- So I think this would be a pretty typical
- 16 case. The husband says he was fine. The wife says, no,
- 17 he kicked me in the stomach and did a lot of other
- things. The judge hearing the two sides says I can't
- 19 say the husband's right.
- MR. REGAN: Okay.
- JUSTICE BREYER: So we don't know. Now,
- your idea is to send the child back to the husband
- 23 unless the child gets up there and chooses between
- 24 parents. That's pretty tough on 8- or 9- or 10-year-old
- 25 children and -- very tough. And you're going to keep --

- 1 the -- you're going to send it back to the father in
- 2 this situation unless the mother can prove it's
- 3 intolerable, either because of physical -- I mean, my
- 4 goodness, a physical or psychological. All the doctors
- 5 saying he should stay in New York. A typical problem
- 6 for a family court judge, really tough.
- 7 So you have the Convention which says in the
- 8 preamble look to the interests of the child. You have
- 9 every other country saying that's what it really means;
- in other words, they're against you. You have the
- 11 Department of State, in charge of the treaty, saying
- that's what it really means and otherwise against you.
- 13 And so what do you have going for you? That isn't your
- 14 fault that there isn't too much going for you, but
- 15 nonetheless, I'd like to know what it is.
- MR. REGAN: I think we have a lot going for
- us. You've asked -- I think you've hit, Justice Breyer,
- on just about every issue that I could possibly want to
- 19 address today. But -- and -- and let me say, I -- I
- respect the position of the 8- or 9-year-old child, the
- 21 difficulty. I was that child before a judge on the --
- 22 giving that sort of testimony. So I certainly
- 23 appreciate it.
- But on this -- this question of best
- interests, the Convention makes the decided choice if

- 1 courts -- the Convention defines how courts are to
- determine that best interest. It doesn't say courts
- 3 should determine what is in the best interest of the
- 4 child. It says look at whether the child is settled
- 5 under Article 12 or, if that's not applicable, you may
- 6 look at Article 13. Other than that, the presumption is
- 7 the best interest of the child is for return.
- 8 You mention that the State Department is
- 9 against us, which I'm happy to take the opportunity to
- 10 address here. We don't believe that the State
- 11 Department's views should be accorded great weight in
- 12 this situation. Their brief does not speak to the
- diplomatic consequences of equitable tolling. It
- doesn't speak to -- it doesn't speak to the idea that
- 15 equitable tolling will somehow impair our ability to
- 16 recover children abducted from the United States.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, Mr. Regan, aside
- 18 from the position of the United States, which -- which
- 19 has changed, you made that point, the determination
- that's being made at this stage is really one of venue.
- 21 It's where the main bout will be fought out. And so we
- 22 don't want that to linger for a long time. We want that
- decision to be made with dispatch.
- And as one of the amici brief informs us,
- 25 many of these what you call kidnappers happen to be

- 1 badly abused women and if you -- if they had to go under
- 2 Article 13, then they would have this full-blown, was he
- 3 really the abuser? Doing it without equitable tolling,
- 4 that question is reserved for the main -- for the main
- 5 bout. I suppose if we had a case where the judge isn't
- 6 certain was the father abuser or not, that judge would
- 7 feel an obligation to stretch out this venue
- 8 determination to see if it's an Article 13 situation.
- 9 MR. REGAN: I think, Justice Ginsburg, the
- domestic violence situation, which I am entirely
- 11 sensitive to and appreciate, illustrates the difficulty
- of these cases and -- and that courts can't really
- 13 figure out what's -- who's right or who did what in
- 14 these circumstances. Most of -- usually all of the
- evidence is overseas on that issue.
- What the Convention -- the approach the
- 17 Convention decides on taking is that, first, there is no
- 18 self-help remedy certainly for concealment, that -- that
- 19 nothing excuses concealment of the child. And, in fact,
- to the extent you said there's a goal and a value of
- 21 shortening these proceedings, to the extent equitable
- 22 tolling disincentivizes concealment, it does that. I
- mean, the opposite rule says if you conceal, i.e., you
- extend that period of time during which there's no
- relationship, you'll be rewarded.

- 1 It's an enormous incentive. And our point
- 2 is there is the proper safety valve. The standard under
- 3 Article 12-2 is so pedestrian, it is essentially have
- 4 you failed to be -- aside from abducting your child,
- 5 since then, have you failed to be a normal parent? Is
- 6 your child in school? Does he or she go to ballet
- 7 class? Do you take him or her to church? Do they have
- 8 friends? All those things were satisfied here. Can you
- 9 be employed? What's your legal -- what's your
- 10 immigration status?
- Now, this case illustrates just how simple
- 12 and routine that is to achieve. And here, she didn't
- 13 have a child. She's not here legally. I guess the
- 14 court found that she had the depth and quantity of
- 15 friendships that your typical pre-kindergartner has, and
- that was enough for her to defeat return.
- 17 The Convention properly balances these
- 18 things by saying where it presents -- and courts have
- done this. The district courts are doing this. No one
- 20 says -- you know, the State, the Solicitor General and
- 21 our Respondent -- points to a single case where they
- 22 say, here's equitable tolling and boy, you know, the
- 23 court got it wrong. Here was the wrong outcome because
- they applied equitable tolling as they have been doing
- 25 for nearly two decades. Courts can do this. But the

- 1 question, as it is in Cannon, can't be as simple as
- well, are you -- are you doing fine here in the United
- 3 States?
- 4 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Regan, Justice Breyer
- 5 pointed out that all other countries seem to disagree
- 6 with you. That's obviously a concern of ours when we
- 7 interpret a treaty, that all other countries interpret
- 8 it in a -- in a single way. Do you contest that? Are
- 9 there any other countries that apply equitable tolling
- 10 rules?
- MR. REGAN: We believe that it's neither
- 12 surprising nor momentous that foreign courts have failed
- to adopt equitable tolling. It's not surprising because
- they lacked the presumption that we do. It's not as
- 15 significant for two reasons. One, we think, as I've
- 16 alluded to, I think they miscomprehend equitable
- tolling. The Cannon count calls it "too crude," that it
- won't allow for an accounting of the child's interest.
- 19 And as -- as the courts in the United States have been
- 20 clear, it does. It provides --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: But they may be wrong. Who
- 22 cares if they're wrong? The point is a treaty should be
- interpreted uniformly by all the parties to it. And
- you're telling me, well, all the rest of them interpret
- it another way, but they're wrong. You know, everybody

- is out of step but me. That's -- that's just not right.
- MR. REGAN: Not at all, Justice Scalia. And
- 3 it was actually -- your question relates to my third
- 4 point.
- 5 What those decisions reflect is that the
- 6 Convention leaves room within Article 12 for the
- 7 operation of domestic law. Article 12 speaks to
- 8 commencement of proceedings. You must commence
- 9 proceedings within one year. It speaks to settlement.
- 10 The Convention -- it is Congress in ICARA that defines
- 11 how one commences proceedings. It says you must file in
- 12 a court that has jurisdiction. That's Section 11603(b)
- and (f)(3), which are at 117 through 121a of the
- 14 Petition Appendix.
- Congress decides that's how you -- how you
- 16 stop that period, by filing in a court having
- jurisdiction. Other countries provide nation -- courts
- of nationwide jurisdiction. Some countries provide that
- 19 the central authority itself will file the petition for
- the applicant or will file in its own interest on behalf
- 21 of the child.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: None of that is covered by
- the treaty. Yes, each State may apply its own law with
- respect to matters not covered by the treaty. But I do
- not read that to say to me that each State may apply its

- 1 own law in interpreting the provisions of the treaty and
- 2 so can create exceptions on the basis of equitable
- discretion when the treaty has none or because its
- 4 courts use that in another -- in other contexts, or
- 5 create an exception on the basis of equitable tolling.
- 6 This is a matter of interpreting the treaty,
- 7 not of bringing into effect some other principle of --
- 8 of State law that overrides the treaty. That's how I
- 9 read that provision.
- MR. REGAN: Our position is that if you look
- 11 at the drafting history here, the drafting history was
- 12 preliminary draft Article 11 provided for two periods:
- 13 Automatic return, if you will, return subject to the
- 14 Article 13 and 20 defenses if you file within 6 months;
- or for a period -- a discovery rule capped at one year
- if you didn't know the whereabouts of the child.
- 17 Some countries said those periods are too
- 18 short, some said they're too long. Some said we don't
- 19 want to have to deal with this discovery rule issue,
- 20 concerned about the evidentiary burdens. What's
- 21 important is what the drafters did. They extended that
- 22 first period to a year and then, with respect to this
- 23 discovery rule concept, they said: We're going to give
- you Article 18, it provides for return at any time;
- we're going to provide Article 34, which the explanatory

- 1 report highlights, is meant to provide for invocation of
- domestic law or rules, particularly where 12-2 is
- 3 implicated. And it left for countries to define the --
- 4 to define key elements of Article 12-2. In doing --
- 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm sorry. That's
- 6 turning legislative history in my mind on its head.
- 7 They considered directly, if you study the
- 8 SG's brief, a discovery rule that would have codified
- 9 equitable tolling. And there was lengthy discussion
- 10 about it and a decision that they wouldn't do that, that
- instead they would expand the period to a year where
- 12 automatic return was required, and they introduced the
- 13 best interest of the child after that year, and that
- that was now a balancing of all interests, the parents'
- and the child's.
- And you're right, they had other provisions
- that would affect the possible return or lack thereof,
- and they never wanted to stop a court from returning a
- 19 child if it in its equitable discretion decided it was
- appropriate. But you're turning that legislative
- 21 history on its head a little bit.
- MR. REGAN: Justice Sotomayor, we believe
- that the State Department's reading of that history, of
- that drafting history, is oversimplified because there
- were objections to that period, to that -- to that

- discovery rule that weren't simply to a discovery rule
- 2 as a general matter. It was that some countries said:
- 3 We don't want to have to deal with that. Other
- 4 countries said it needs to be longer.
- And so the choice that was made was a choice
- 6 to give countries flexibility to determine how they want
- 7 to calculate that period, when it should be set, and
- 8 potentially to employ equitable tolling. The
- 9 jurisdiction convention --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Don't use up your time.
- MR. REGAN: The jurisdiction convention is
- 12 consistent with that idea.
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- MR. REGAN: I'd like to reserve my time.
- Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Ms. Moskowitz.
- 17 ORAL ARGUMENT OF LAUREN A. MOSKOWITZ
- ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Mr. Chief Justice, and may
- 20 it please the court:
- To reverse the Second Circuit's holding and
- 22 to apply equitable tolling to Article 12 would be
- 23 squarely at odds with the convention's task, purpose,
- and drafting history, as well as contrary to the
- 25 post-ratification understanding and interpretation of

- 1 every other signatory state to consider the issue.
- Your Honors, we ended on a note of drafting
- history, and to return to Justice Sotomayor's question
- 4 about turning that a bit on its head, I agree. The
- 5 drafting history specifically shows that the countries
- 6 considered two periods: One of prompt return, return
- 7 forthwith within 6 months of the removal; and 6 months
- 8 from the discovery of the whereabouts of the child if
- ⁹ the child were not known.
- 10 And what the drafters thought -- some
- 11 thought the period needed to be longer, but there were
- 12 countries that wanted it to be shorter. There were
- 13 countries that were very concerned that the child would
- 14 become settled in the new environment such that
- uprooting that child again just for purposes of having a
- 16 custody determination in the -- in the former country of
- 17 habitual residence would be contrary to that child's
- 18 interest.
- 19 So they struck a balance. They -- they
- 20 negotiated over -- over several drafts and finally
- 21 arrived at a single period of one year. But that wasn't
- 22 going to be a cutoff. Instead of having a statute of
- limitation, statute of proposed construct they said the
- obligation is going to continue and it's going to
- continue until the child turns 16, unless it is

- 1 demonstrated that the child is now settled in her -- in
- 2 its new environment.
- JUSTICE ALITO: But what -- what troubles me
- 4 about your position is that it undermines the best
- 5 interests of children in a very powerful way insofar as
- 6 it does not deter, and indeed encourages, provides a
- 7 great incentive for parents to abduct their children.
- 8 And that was the central purpose of the Convention, to
- 9 prevent harm to children and also to parents, but
- 10 centrally to children who are abducted.
- 11 And if you have a rule that says if can
- 12 abduct the child and you can hide for a year, which
- isn't very difficult, then all you have to do is provide
- some evidence of settlement, and you are going to -- you
- are going to win, you are going to deter return.
- 16 Am I wrong to be concerned about that?
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Your Honor, your concern is
- 18 not wrong, but I think it's not founded on what -- what
- will happen here. I don't think it encourages abduction
- and concealment, because that -- those facts of
- 21 concealment are going to be taken into account into
- whether the child in fact is settled.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, all right. Perhaps
- that's the solution to the problem then. I wonder if
- you would accept that, that there is no equitable

- 1 tolling, let's assume for the sake of argument, but
- 2 abduction is a strong factor that weighs against the
- 3 return, that weighs against the failure to return the
- 4 child, not just something that can be disposed of in a
- 5 sentence, which is basically what the district court did
- 6 here, but a very strong factor that has to be taken into
- 7 account in the exercise of equitable discretion.
- 8 Would you disagree with that?
- 9 MS. MOSKOWITZ: A bit, Your Honor, and
- 10 it's -- the abduction itself is the -- what triggers the
- 11 Convention to begin with. Every single case that is
- 12 heard under the Convention involves a wrongful removal
- or retention. There will be illegal abduction every
- time. And the drafters in fact absolutely were trying
- to address that harm to children.
- 16 And they -- the paramount interest of the
- 17 children were designing this Convention, and they did
- 18 state that there were two --
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: I think they had it in
- 20 mind, not just the interest of children, but the
- 21 interest of parents. It's simply not true that in all
- 22 cases involving children the paramount interest of the
- 23 child governs. That's not the case, or else we would
- remove many children from their parents in this country.
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Absolutely, Your Honor.

1 JUSTICE SCALIA: Parents have rights. 2 MS. MOSKOWITZ: Absolutely. 3 JUSTICE SCALIA: And that is one of the 4 things that this treaty considers. 5 MS. MOSKOWITZ: Your Honor, it does not 6 consider ultimately the custody determination and with 7 which parent the child should live. That is expressly 8 not part of the Convention, and that is what --9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, it may be --10 whether or not the child is settled in a particular case is certainly going to be a significant consideration in 11 12 the custody determination, isn't it? 13 MS. MOSKOWITZ: Yes, Your Honor, I would 14 presume so. But as well as any wrongful acts of either 15 or both parents would be taken into account in the full-blown merits best interest of the child custody 16 17 determination. What the Convention is trying to address 18 in the instances of where a child is now settled in a 19 new environment after having been at least one year in 20 the new environment is, should the child be uprooted in 21 anticipation of that full-blown hearing. 2.2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What's the fairness --23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: The problem is 24 you're each -- you're each using the child as the tool 25 in the objective that you have in representing the

- 1 parents. On the one side is the allegation of
- 2 inequitable conduct in concealment. On the other side
- 3 is the interest in settlement. That's a dispute between
- 4 two parents, and the child is being used as -- as -- I
- 5 don't know what -- you know, a tool in implementing
- 6 those conflicting considerations.
- 7 And to the extent that the Convention was
- 8 designed to deter that kind of kidnapping, it adopted
- 9 a -- a fairly strict rule. And you're each trying to
- 10 say, oh, the rule doesn't mean what it means, because
- don't worry, we'll take those considerations into
- 12 account in addressing custody; and on the other side,
- well, don't worry because there's not that much
- 14 difference between 12 and 13.
- So how are we supposed to decide between
- those two conflicting considerations of the parents
- while maintaining the paramount concern, certainly not
- 18 the exclusive one but the significant one, in the
- 19 interest of the child.
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Yes, Your Honor. And just
- 21 to address the one point that the Petitioner raised of,
- don't worry about Article 12 because there's Article 13,
- those are completely different constructs. In fact,
- 24 Congress recognized that when it set a different burden
- of proof for defenses under Article 13 as opposed to the

- 1 well settled -- settled analysis under Article 12.
- 2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But that cuts
- 3 against you in some respects. You say there is such a
- 4 big difference and therefore it is very important that
- 5 the kidnapping parent do the best he or she can to
- 6 conceal the child's presence so they get beyond 13 and
- 7 into 12.
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: No, Your Honor, because if
- 9 the parent is concealing the child -- for example, if
- 10 the parent is moving from place to place to evade
- detection or changing the child's name or not enrolling
- 12 the child in school to avoid detection --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: My gosh, all it takes it
- 14 moving to Peoria. I mean, I don't mean to denigrate
- 15 Peoria, but all it takes is moving to a place that has
- 16 no connection to --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Justice Sotomayor is from
- 18 New York.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Yes, obviously.
- 20 (Laughter.)
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Obviously.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Those are us from
- the Midwest think it's actually easier to hide a child
- in New York.
- 25 (Laughter.)

- 1 MS. MOSKOWITZ: Yes, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I do have a point -- a
- 3 question though. What sense does this make when -- that
- 4 a child who -- a suit is filed within the year, but the
- 5 litigation takes 2 or the child who -- the filing is a
- 6 day after the year, and the litigation takes a year and
- 7 they're both in the same situation. Why should those
- 8 two children be treated differently? Why should one
- 9 have the benefit of settled now and the other not have
- 10 it?
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Your Honor, I think --
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What sense does it make
- when, as Justice Alito indicated, part of the central
- purposes of the Convention is to avoid the kidnapping of
- 15 children?
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Your Honor, absolutely, that
- is one of the objectives of the Convention, and it
- 18 exists because that was presumed to be contrary to the
- 19 interest of children. And I don't dispute that. In the
- 20 majority of the cases, that's true.
- But the concept that the drafters had to
- 22 grapple with this issue -- they wanted to deter child
- 23 abductions, absolutely. But they also recognized that
- 24 at some point in time it wasn't going to be just about
- 25 children at large. It was going to be about --

- 1 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So why isn't Article 13
- 2 enough protection? It has to do with -- and unlike
- 3 Justice Scalia, I don't think it's psychological or
- 4 physical harm necessarily by the parent, but by the
- 5 situation.
- 6 MS. MOSKOWITZ: Right.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: The return. You agree
- 8 with that.
- 9 MS. MOSKOWITZ: Yes, Your Honor. I do think
- 10 it -- it should be broader than that. I think there are
- 11 courts that -- the Article 13 defense is supposed to be
- 12 narrow just like the Article 12-2 settled exception.
- 13 But the settled exception isn't enough -- excuse me,
- 14 Article 13 isn't enough because the drafters wanted
- 15 Article 12, too. They wanted to be able to take into
- account the situation of the child after this one year.
- 17 And why one year and not one year including the hearing,
- 18 I think it was a balance. The drafters were concerned
- both that it was going to be too long and that it was
- 20 going to be too short.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Ms. Moskowitz, going back to
- Justice Alito's question. Could you tell me how you
- think this works? You said, in response to Justice
- 24 Alito, that sometimes concealment can be a factor in
- determining whether a child is settled. And I presume

- 1 you mean if somebody conceals the child by moving the
- 2 child from place to place, the child would not be
- 3 settled.
- 4 Is it also a factor in determining whether a
- 5 settled child should nonetheless be returned?
- 6 MS. MOSKOWITZ: Your Honor, I -- I -- that's
- 7 the question of whether and to what extent there is
- 8 discretion to return a child -- a settled child under
- 9 Article 12. And I think --
- 10 JUSTICE KAGAN: Or under Article 18.
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Your Honor, Article 18 -- my
- 12 understanding of Article 18 and the government's
- interpretation of Article 18 is that Article 18 was
- designed not as a duty or something arising under the
- 15 Convention, but a recognition that the Convention is not
- 16 an exclusive statement and not intended to occupy the
- space on child abduction and return.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I think your answer to
- 19 Justice Kagan's question has to be no, or else I don't
- understand what we're doing here.
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Your Honor, I struggle with
- this because I think that there is a reading of the
- 23 plain language that says no. But it's -- there is a
- 24 general feeling that there should be some sort of escape
- 25 hatch --

- 1 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, what is the answer?
- 2 I'd like a straight answer in your opinion, because
- Justice Kagan's case, the mother kidnaps the child.
- 4 They live in a grain elevator, a nicely refurbished
- 5 grain elevator, in Peoria for a year. And after the
- 6 year, a month later the father finds both of them, goes
- 7 to a family judge -- a very tough job by the way -- and
- 8 the family judge reads this and he says, well, I have to
- 9 admit the child is settled here now in Iowa. All right.
- 10 Is settled.
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Okay.
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: But send the child back to
- 13 London, he's going to be just about as settled. I mean,
- really, it's not that much difference. But I can't say
- 15 the child is not settled.
- The father says this is the most unfair
- thing I've ever seen. She hides out for a year. The
- 18 child could be just as well back in London. Almost as
- 19 well. Who knows? Maybe better. But now, what can the
- 20 family court do -- judge do? That's the straight
- 21 question we've been trying to get your answer to that,
- 22 and it isn't an answer to say -- you could say, if
- that's the answer, I don't know.
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Your Honor, in -- in that
- 25 question, there's -- there's the question of what can

- 1 they do under the Convention and what can they do.
- JUSTICE BREYER: No, what can they do? I
- 3 just want to know if the family court judge will say
- 4 please settle this, and the two of them won't.
- 5 MS. MOSKOWITZ: Yes, Your Honor.
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: And so now what can the
- 7 judge do? Is the father simply out of luck or not?
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: No, Your Honor, because a
- 9 full-blown merits, best-interest-of-the-child analysis
- 10 under the -- the custody-type family court proceeding
- that is envisioned to follow a return petition under the
- 12 Convention will take all of those facts into account.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: No, but prior to that.
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Prior to.
- 15 JUSTICE KAGAN: If you could go back to --
- do you agree with Justice Scalia, that really, at that
- point, there's nothing to do? Once the determination
- has been made that the child is settled, there is no
- remaining discretion that the judge has?
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Your Honor, I think there is
- 21 some discretion under Article 12 to return the settled
- 22 child, but it cannot be under a set of facts that were
- 23 completely within the minds of the drafters when they
- 24 chose the one-year period.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: But you say -- I don't

- 1 understand what you're saying. Give us an example.
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Your Honor, it's hard to
- 3 come up with a specific example, but there can't -- it
- 4 can't be --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: You just don't want to say
- 6 no. It seems to me your case requires you to say no,
- and it's no help to me to say, well, you know, there may
- 8 be some exceptions that I can't describe. Tell me the
- 9 exceptions if there are any.
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Your Honor, the -- the
- 11 exception to whether a child that is found to be settled
- 12 after all the facts --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes.
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: -- of concealment are taken
- 15 to -- into account, there -- there should remain some
- 16 discretion --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Under 13, right? Is that
- the discretion you're talking about?
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: No, Your Honor. It's the
- discretion under Article 12, but it's in the same vein
- of there is discretion under Article 13 and 20, as well.
- 22 The way that the language is written in Article 13, for
- 23 example, states that the State is not bound -- I'm on
- 24 136-A of the Petition Appendix -- that the State is not
- bound to order the return if it is established.

- So it -- it's not saying that the return
- 2 must be denied if these defenses are established.
- 3 There's slightly different language in Article 12, which
- 4 I think is a reflection of the different drafting --
- 5 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, you -- you're
- 6 confusing me. Let's say I'm the judge who has to decide
- 7 this. The one-year period has just past and I have
- 8 evidence that this child who is now two years old has
- 9 some friends, goes to play with the friends, goes to the
- 10 park, has become accustomed to some American customs,
- 11 knows the neighborhood.
- So the child is settled to that degree. And
- 13 you say even if there's been very elaborate -- a very
- 14 elaborate effort of concealment, no proffered
- justification for the abduction, no indication that
- there would be any serious harm if the child were sent
- 17 back to the U.K., you say that's just too bad. That's
- 18 your answer?
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: No, Your Honor. I think
- 20 some of the factors you pointed out, for example, that
- there would be no serious harm if the child were
- returned, not necessarily physical harm or intolerable
- 23 situation under Article 13, but there -- Article 12
- 24 settlement does take into account roots. It's not
- 25 routine, it's not --

- JUSTICE BREYER: But can you give me any
- 2 authority? I read that exactly in Article 12, but
- you've now given me a different impression. What
- 4 Article 12 says is that if it's less than a year, the
- 5 child is returned forthwith. If it's more than a year,
- 6 the child shall be returned forthwith unless -- unless
- 7 it is demonstrated the child is now settled in its new
- 8 environment. It doesn't say you don't return it if the
- 9 child is now well settled in the environment. It just
- 10 says you don't have to return it forthwith.
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Yes, Your Honor.
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: So I would have thought
- that that would have opened room for discretionary
- 14 factors. But you have not given me a case that said
- that that's so. You have not given me anybody who said
- that what I thought was the natural reading, and which
- you'd like to be the natural reading, you've not given
- any support for the proposition that it is the natural
- 19 reading.
- 20 JUSTICE SCALIA: And I -- I assumed from
- 21 your brief that that was not the reading you were giving
- 22 it. And that is not the reading it has to be given,
- 23 frankly. I read it the other way: "Shall order the
- 24 return unless it is demonstrated that the child is now
- 25 settled." I assume that to mean in which case you shall

- 1 not order the return. Isn't that the way you've been
- 2 reading it?
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: No, Your Honor. We do in
- 4 our --
- 5 JUSTICE SCALIA: Oh, it is not. Okay.
- 6 Well, then, gee, we don't have a lot to argue about.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, if that's the case, if
- 8 you're reading it that way -- I mean, I was reading it
- 9 Justice Scalia's way, too.
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: Of course.
- 11 JUSTICE KAGAN: The first clause says
- 12 "shall" and the second clause says "shall not." But
- there is an alternate reading where the first clause
- says "shall" and the second clause essentially says "may
- or may not at your discretion." But, boy, that would
- open up a big discretionary hole if you read it that
- way, wouldn't it?
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: No, Your Honor. It
- shouldn't be read that broadly. It's certainly -- and
- the House of Lords in England, in In re: M, did find
- 21 that there was a residual discretion after finding a
- 22 child was settled.
- JUSTICE BREYER: So I should read that case
- because the language says, "unless it is demonstrated
- 25 the child is now settled. You return it forthwith

- 1 unless it is demonstrated the child is well settled."
- Well, now it's demonstrated well settled. Does that
- mean I cannot return it? Or does it mean I don't have
- 4 to return it?
- 5 MS. MOSKOWITZ: Your Honor, I --
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: And I say -- or you say I
- 7 read that case in the House of Lords and I will discover
- 8 it means you don't have to return it.
- 9 MS. MOSKOWITZ: That's the way the House of
- 10 Lords interpreted it.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And they relied on
- 12 Article 18, didn't they?
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: No, Your Honor. They found
- 14 the discretion within Article 12.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Ms. Moskowitz, what do you
- do about Article 13 in that case, which begins:
- 17 "Notwithstanding the provisions of Article -- of the
- 18 preceding Article 12, the judicial or administrative
- 19 authority requesting is not bound to order the return of
- 20 the child if the person" -- blah, blah, blah. That says
- 21 to me that under 12 you are bound, and you're telling
- me, well, you're really not bound under 12. You have
- discretion anyway.
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Your Honor --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I, frankly, didn't

- 1 understand that that was your argument in this case and
- 2 it -- it puts the whole case in a quite different light.
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Article 12, you are
- 4 absolutely bound to return the child unless you meet one
- of these exceptions within the one year, forthwith
- 6 return. Prompt -- prompt return is the idea of the
- 7 first clause of Article 12. Article --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That's the one year.
- 9 MS. MOSKOWITZ: Correct. And under Article
- 10 12-2, that's saying the child -- the court shall --
- 11 shall also order the return after this 1-year period
- 12 unless it is demonstrated. And the question is what
- happens if it's demonstrated, and that's do you have to
- 14 return still, or can you, or do you have to keep the
- 15 child here? And I think what the, generally the courts
- 16 have found -- and it's not unanimous internationally;
- 17 it's not. Hong Kong says --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: In many cases this would
- be an example. The cost of experts to testify about the
- 20 child's adoption or adaption or settlement in New York
- 21 would be very substantial. The experts who had examined
- the child, the experts who knew about the school, the
- 23 school's officials themselves, would all have to go to
- 24 England to testify. Is that a factor that the courts
- 25 consider, or is that not -- not relevant?

- 1 MS. MOSKOWITZ: Your Honor, I think those
- 2 facts are exactly why the settled exception exists. It
- 3 recognizes that the -- the reason to get the child
- 4 immediately back under the --
- 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: In other words,
- 6 "settlement" is a code word for saying ease of producing
- 7 witnesses?
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: No, Your Honor, it's not.
- 9 But it certainly is a recognition that the -- the
- justification for return and prompt return is in part to
- 11 return to the status quo ante of where child was for
- 12 purposes of having a custody determination.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: May I -- may I ask you, I
- 14 think your brief -- I may not be remembering it
- 15 correctly, but I think you -- you said no equitable
- tolling, and everybody in all the other countries agree
- on that. But there is equitable discretion. I think
- 18 that you -- and the question is, is there this equitable
- 19 discretion notion?
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Your Honor --
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Briefly, please.
- MS. MOSKOWITZ: Thank you.
- 23 They're -- the courts are divided
- internationally on whether equitable discretion exists
- to return a child that has been determined to be

- 1 settled. But I think on balance there should be some
- level of equitable discretion to return a settled child,
- 3 but not under -- simply because of facts of concealment
- 4 that were firmly within the minds of the drafters when
- 5 drafting Article 12.
- 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 7 MS. MOSKOWITZ: Thank you.
- 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Ms. O'Connell.
- 9 ORAL ARGUMENT OF ANN O'CONNELL,
- 10 FOR UNITED STATES, AS AMICUS CURIAE,
- 11 SUPPORTING THE RESPONDENT
- MS. O'CONNELL: Mr. Chief Justice --
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Scalia.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: What's the government's
- position on -- on this question we've just been
- discussing, whether Article 12 is absolute or whether
- there is discretion even within Article 12, even though
- 18 specific elements of discretion are contained in Article
- 19 13?
- MS. O'CONNELL: It's our position that under
- 21 Article 12 there is discretion to return a settled
- 22 child, and that that comes from Article 12 itself. As
- 23 you pointed out, the language of Article 12 says that if
- 24 more than a year has passed the court shall order the
- 25 return of the child, unless the child is settled in her

- 1 new environment. And that -- I mean, I think it's clear
- 2 that that could be read in two ways, and the Court has
- 3 said that when the "similar except shall" formulation --
- 4 and we cited in our brief the Department of Commerce v.
- 5 U.S. House of Representatives case. The "similar except
- 6 shall language, it's interpreted depending on the
- 7 context in which it appears.
- 8 And we think it's very clear from the
- 9 Convention that in the context of the Convention, and
- 10 specifically Article 12, that the better reading is that
- 11 a settled child may be returned.
- 12 JUSTICE SCALIA: Why doesn't the context
- include Section 13, which -- which lists specific
- 14 reasons why you can depart from 12? I mean, it seems
- 15 very strange to say: And in addition to that there's a
- 16 whole pot load of other reasons within -- within 12
- 17 itself.
- MS. O'CONNELL: Well, Article -- it's true
- 19 that Articles 13 and 20 are written in expressly
- discretionary language, but those are sort of set out as
- 21 exceptions to the rule of Article 12. Article 12 is
- written up differently, but there's nothing in the
- 23 Convention that ever says that a child has to stay in
- the country where she has been abducted.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: What's -- what's the -- an

- 1 example of where a settled child might be returned? A
- very -- two very good parents, and the child is very
- 3 adaptable, and so the child can -- is well settled now,
- 4 but the child will be well settled in the new
- 5 environment at well. Is that the -- is that the
- 6 hypothetical?
- 7 MS. O'CONNELL: In exercising the discretion
- 8 the court should be -- it's not just a free --
- 9 free-wheeling discretion that the court is exercising
- 10 under Article 12. We think it's guided by the purposes
- 11 stated in the Convention. So yes, first you look at
- whether the child is settled, and that could be enough
- to defeat the presumption that an abducted child should
- 14 be returned.
- You can also look at whether the child could
- 16 easily resettle if the child was sent back. For
- example, a 10-year-old child who was in school and had a
- 18 lot of friends and a routine in London was abducted to
- 19 the United States for a year. That child may not -- may
- 20 be settled in the United States, but she may not have a
- 21 difficult time resettling.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: You would expect all the
- 23 signatories to this treaty to come up with essentially
- 24 the same exceptions, under -- under what you say is --
- is the interpretation of Article 12?

- 1 MS. O'CONNELL: Well --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I mean, it seems to me it
- 3 just makes that article impossible to apply consistently
- 4 country to country.
- MS. O'CONNELL: No, I don't think so. And
- 6 -- and, the other signatories have -- have almost all, I
- 7 mean I think the Hong Kong court does say that it
- 8 doesn't have discretion, but it said in that case
- 9 nevertheless it would, even if it had discretion, it
- 10 wouldn't order the children returned. But the other
- 11 courts of signatory countries that have interpreted
- 12 Article 12 have all found a discretion, whether it be in
- 13 Article 12 or in Article 8. And if I --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Have they exercised it?
- 15 Have they exercised it, that discretion which they say
- 16 is there?
- MS. O'CONNELL: I mean --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Have they exercised that
- 19 discretion not to apply the -- the mandatory requirement
- of Article 12?
- MS. O'CONNELL: Yes. I mean, courts in the
- 22 United States have done that. I think courts in, in
- 23 other countries --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I'm talking about foreign
- 25 courts.

1 MS. O'CONNELL: -- have as well. Yes. 2 JUSTICE KAGAN: If I understand the way you 3 think this works, you don't -- there's not even a 4 presumption that a settled child will stay, right? 5 You're just saying once you've found a settled child, 6 the obligation to return the child goes away, but at 7 that point it really is a kind of "all things 8 considered" inquiry with no presumption operating at 9 all, just in light of the purposes of the treaty? 10 MS. O'CONNELL: Well, I think the, the last 11 part, Justice Kagan, is the most important part, that it 12 has to be guided by the objectives of the treaty; that 13 it's not a free-wheeling, best interests of the child 14 analysis or where this child should be, but you could 15 take into account the principle in Article 12 that it's 16 harmful to uproot a settled child, but you can also 17 weigh against that the idea that this Convention is 18 really geared in the first place toward preventing 19 abduction. 20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I would think it 21 would be very unusual for a family court in that 22 situation not to go ahead with the custody proceeding 23 before it, because it would think the child is settled. 24 Now, do I send the child back so that they can do the

custody proceeding in England, or just go ahead and do

25

- 1 it here? Don't you think most family court judges would
- 2 say let's just go ahead and do it here?
- MS. O'CONNELL: Well, if there's -- if
- 4 there's reason to send the child back, even -- even a
- 5 settled child, we think that the purposes of the
- 6 Convention should -- should prevail there.
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What kind of
- 8 reasons, what kind of reasons would there -- would there
- 9 be?
- MS. O'CONNELL: That the --
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: To send the child
- 12 back?
- MS. O'CONNELL: That the parent engaged in
- 14 behavior like concealing the child that is -- that is
- 15 not condoned under the Convention, that --
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So you would visit
- on the child the behavior of the parent?
- MS. O'CONNELL: We think the court -- I
- mean, the court has discretion, we think, to order a
- 20 child's returned even if she's settled. I mean, that --
- 21 that discretion could be abused if a child has been in
- the United States, for example, for 5 years and the
- court says, well, the child was being concealed so we
- 24 will send the child back. But but we think -- and
- there will be some cases in which the court could

- 1 probably not abuse its discretion by deciding the case
- 2 either way.
- But yes, we think on the one hand equitable
- 4 tolling is not a good way to deal with this problem,
- 5 because Article 12 specifically wants courts to take
- 6 into consideration the interest of the child --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, whatever fears
- 8 my colleagues have, I've only found two, or I should say
- 9 my clerks have only found two, published decisions in
- 10 which courts have returned the child. So it's not as if
- they are ignoring the settlement issue. In fact, some
- 12 might say that they are not giving abduction enough
- weight in -- in enough cases.
- But I -- the Hong Kong court who said there
- 15 might not be discretion to return a settled child was
- 16 not the highest court of Hong Kong, either.
- MS. O'CONNELL: That's -- that's right. I
- don't think any of these decisions are from the highest
- 19 court.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And so if we're going to
- 21 give uniform meaning, the uniform meaning of
- international weight is that abduction is one factor for
- a court to consider in its equitable weighing on
- settlement, because that's the whole purpose of the
- 25 Convention. That's a central reason in the preamble.

1 MS. O'CONNELL: That's right. 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But isn't there --3 JUSTICE SCALIA: There's always -- isn't 4 there always abduction? As your friend has pointed out, 5 the whole treaty only applies where the child has been 6 abducted. So you say: Oh, well, there's a special 7 exception to the rules of the treaty where the child has 8 been abducted. But that's what the treaty applies to. 9 MS. O'CONNELL: We understand that an 10 abduction is going to take place in every case. I think 11 we are looking for something more than what happened in 12 this case, some sort of concealment that happened, so 13 that the parent that is left behind and looking for the 14 child cannot find him. 15 JUSTICE ALITO: I don't know what sense -- I 16 don't know what sense that makes. Let's say a child is 17 abducted in Mexico and let's say that the parent who is 18 left behind is not a rich or sophisticated person, and 19 now the child is brought to the United States. 20 And the parent in Mexico has a year to find 21 the child in the United States. Doesn't speak English. 22 Can't easily find a lawyer to handle the case. He's got an enormous country to try to find the child in the 23 24 United States. How in the world is that going to be 25 done?

1 MS. O'CONNELL: Well --2 JUSTICE ALITO: You don't need to do very 3 much concealment. You can go to Peoria. You can go to 4 New York City, and -- and it's going to be an enormous 5 struggle to find that child within a year. 6 MS. O'CONNELL: The first thing I'll point out is that Article 12, the drafters assumed that there 7 8 was going to be some difficulty in locating children, 9 and they decided on this one-year period. But also 10 point out the State Department dedicates significant 11 resources to finding children that are thought to have 12 been abducted to the United States. They have access to 13 all sorts of federal law enforcement databases to try to 14 determine if the child has come here. They have --15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: How -- how would that be 16 aid be invoked? Take Justice Scalia's example. The 17 parent left behind in Mexico, no resources of her own or 18 his own. How would the State Department get into the 19 act? 20 MS. O'CONNELL: Typically, the left-behind 21 parent will approach the central authority in his or her 22 own country, and typically with an idea of what the 23 abducting parent's connections are to other countries. 24 And so if the United States is singled out as a country 25 to which the child might have been taken, the Mexican

- 1 central authority would contact the United States
- 2 central authority, and immediately somebody would be
- 3 assigned to start looking for that child within the
- 4 United States.
- 5 And there are a great number of resources
- 6 that are channeled toward that through the State
- 7 Department in working with other Federal agencies,
- 8 the -- the crime databases, the Federal parent locater
- 9 service that's used to track down people in the United
- 10 States to pay child support. It works with State law
- 11 enforcement agencies who can check school records and
- 12 driver's license records and things like that. So it's
- 13 not like it's -- I mean, it is difficult. We are
- 14 acknowledging that it's quite difficult.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: How -- how separate are
- 16 the two concepts of the well best interest of the child
- and the interest in policing parents so they don't
- 18 abduct? At what point do they intersect?
- MS. O'CONNELL: Well, I mean, we think --
- the Convention starts with the presumption that a
- 21 settled child should be returned. And so the starting
- 22 presumption is always that you should not abduct the
- 23 child --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: The child settled, that's
- when the abduction took place.

1 MS. O'CONNELL: Excuse me? 2 JUSTICE KENNEDY: You said it started that a 3 settled child should be returned? 4 MS. O'CONNELL: That -- that an abducted 5 child should be returned. 6 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Yes, abducted. 7 MS. O'CONNELL: When the -- a determination 8 that the child is settled can overcome that presumption, 9 and then the other equitable factors, like concealment, 10 come into play. 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Scalia? 12 JUSTICE SCALIA: You know, I have one more 13 question. At the end of the day, now that I understand 14 the government's position, I don't see any difference 15 between your position and -- and the position of -- of 16 the Petitioner here except that he wants to call it 17 equitable tolling, and you want to say we can take 18 concealment into account under Section 12 --19 MS. O'CONNELL: No --20 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- and not apply the absolute rule where there's been concealment. I don't 21 22 care whether you call it equitable tolling or not. 23 MS. O'CONNELL: I think the positions are 24 quite different, because under an equitable tolling 25 analysis, putting aside that you may be able to satisfy

- 1 a different Convention defense, like one under Article
- 2 13 or 20, under an equitable tolling analysis, the court
- would be prohibited from taking into account whether the
- 4 child is settled in her new environment in determining
- 5 whether to send her back.
- 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 7 Mr. Regan, five minutes.
- 8 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF SHAWN P. REGAN
- 9 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
- MR. REGAN: I would agree --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That is, in fact, the
- 12 central difference, isn't it?
- MR. REGAN: I would agree with Ms. O'Connell
- that there is a difference.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: A huge one, whether the
- 16 court can --
- MR. REGAN: The difference is not that a
- 18 court cannot take the facts and circumstances of the
- 19 child's life into account. It can. That is -- that is
- the Mendez case. That's Reyes Olguin. That's Blondin.
- 21 There are innumerable cases that show that. They can --
- the Court can take that into account. It's just a
- 23 question of what is the question to which the Court
- 24 applies those facts.
- Under our circumstance, it's not this

- 1 Article 12-2, is the child doing fine here? Is the
- 2 child living a normal life? It's a different question.
- 3 Is the -- is the goal and motive and presumption for
- 4 return going to be defeated here because it would
- 5 present a risk of harm to the child? We think that's
- 6 the right question because that's the only question that
- 7 deters concealment.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Are you -- can I ask you
- 9 how it works here? I realize I don't know. A year has
- 10 passed. The father never found out where the child was.
- 11 Now he suddenly finds out. He runs to Iowa. The judge
- 12 looks at this Convention, and he says, well, the year's
- passed. You've lost, let's say. And I don't have to --
- 14 I don't have to return him forthwith. The child's not
- 15 going to suffer intolerable injury. I can't use that.
- 16 I don't have to return him forthwith.
- Now, I look, is he settled? Yes. He's
- 18 settled. All right. End of the matter. But do we now,
- in the discretion of the father, have a custody hearing?
- The father can say, yes, all that's true, but I should
- 21 have custody. And he goes, and under Iowa law, we see
- 22 who is entitled to custody. And he has something going
- for him. Namely, the mother's acted pretty badly,
- unless she has excusing circumstances in abducting the
- 25 child.

- 1 Does that happen or not?
- MR. REGAN: Well, the custody proceeding
- 3 would occur in a different court. Of course, it
- 4 wouldn't occur in the Federal --
- JUSTICE BREYER: No, it would go to the
- 6 family court. So is that -- would that happen? Could
- 7 that happen? Of course, I think.
- MR. REGAN: Of course. Of course.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. If the answer is of
- 10 course, what we're talking about here is on the one
- 11 hand, we don't want to encourage abductions. On the
- other hand, we don't want to treat the child as a yo-yo.
- MR. REGAN: Absolutely.
- 14 JUSTICE BREYER: So the question is whether
- the custody hearing will be in a family court in Britain
- or whether it'll be in a family court in the United
- 17 States.
- MR. REGAN: That's right.
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: That's the correct
- 20 question; is that right?
- MR. REGAN: That is the question. And also
- 22 the question is how do we deter --
- 23 JUSTICE BREYER: So our issue about whether
- there's discretion or -- it's a little bit secondary
- because we can have a big, full-blown hearing about who

- 1 should have custody, though, it will be in a different
- 2 court. It's true. You lose. There is more incentive
- 3 to kidnap the child. It's also true if you win, there
- 4 is a much greater likelihood that the custody hearing
- 5 will be in Britain rather that the United States, which
- 6 is the yo-yo problem.
- 7 MR. REGAN: And our concern here, Justice
- 8 Breyer --
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Now, go -- now
- 10 say what you want to say. Now, if I understand it
- 11 correctly.
- MR. REGAN: Our concern is the deterrence
- and prevention, which is the goal of the Convention.
- 14 Justice Scalia asked about other nations in uniformity.
- 15 And there could be no better reflection about the room
- 16 created in Article 12 and that this -- that the
- uniformity is not -- or that this is not a problem where
- we need to be so concerned about uniformity.
- 19 In 2006, through the special commission
- 20 process, the meeting of the -- of the members of the
- 21 Convention, the United States specifically apprised the
- other nations that it was employing equitable tolling in
- the 12-2 context. As the government concedes, no one
- else disagreed. No one expressed any concern about the
- United States doing that. That's a clear reflection

- 1 that there is this room in Article 12.
- 2 Government's and Respondent's position is
- 3 that concealment may be taken into account. The problem
- 4 there is the Respondent still has this enormous
- 5 incentive to conceal, which is the purpose -- that's the
- 6 primary goal, to prevent that from happening, concealing
- 7 abduction. That's the goal of the Convention.
- But also, there's no standard. They haven't
- 9 articulated a standard. The government doesn't
- 10 articulate one. It -- it amounts to a standard that
- 11 says concealment matters unless it doesn't. That's an
- 12 enormous -- that ephemeral standard is very difficult
- for a respondent to overcome. It's very difficult for a
- 14 district court to apply. And what it does is it creates
- 15 this incentive to conceal, because no one even knows
- 16 what the question is.
- 17 Equitable tolling defines the question
- within the context of the Convention. It says by
- 19 tolling, this is the question you should answer. If
- there's not to be tolling and there are lots of
- 21 courts -- lots of cases where courts have found we
- 22 shouldn't toll because the child wasn't concealed or the
- parent didn't exercise due diligence finding the child,
- then we'll ask the Article 12-2 question, whether the
- 25 child is settled.

Τ.	The bottom line is equitable discretion wil.
2	result in the abduction of more children. Equitable
3	tolling will disincentivize that. I would urge the
4	Court to look at those cases I mentioned, Mendez,
5	Blondin. Reyes Olguin is another one. 2005, Westlaw
6	67094, a 2005 case in the Eastern District of New York,
7	Judge Gleeson where return was denied under these
8	circumstances. Now, that's a natural 12-1 case, I
9	believe. But the court looks at factors of settlement.
10	Excuse me.
11	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
12	The case is submitted.
13	(Whereupon, at 11:09 a.m., the case in the
14	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
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